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EAST TIMOR

As Violence Descended: Testimonies From East Timorese Refugees

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These eyewitness accounts convey something of the horror and scale of human rights abuses visited on the East Timorese population before and in the aftermath of the announcement of the result of the independence ballot on 4 September 1999. They contain details of alleged killings, beatings, indiscriminate shootings and the forcible displacement of East Timorese civilians, and tell of a landscape laid waste by marauding militias and complicit Indonesian security forces. Many of the accounts allege instances of direct collusion between military or the police and the militias, and of instances in which the police failed or refused to intervene to protect civilian life.

Even so, these testimonies - from witnesses who were in Dili and were fortunate enough to find sanctuary in the UNAMET (UN Assistance Mission to East Timor) compound before being evacuated to Australia in the days that followed - are only fragments of a larger story. The experiences of the vast majority of East Timorese, of those in other districts where massive forced relocation is known to have to taken place and even of those in Dili who did not reach the UNAMET compound, are still largely unknown. These are voices that have yet to be heard.

Even as East Timor looks forward to independence, these testimonies give some indication of the enormous cost that this human rights tragedy has inflicted on its survivors; of divided and grieving families, uncertain futures, and of the physical and psychological scars that many now bear. Amnesty International also believes that what resonates clearly from these accounts is the need for truth, justice and reparation, as East Timor begins to reconstruct itself out of the violence.

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Introduction

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Testimonies

"I feel very fragile with trauma"
Madalena's story

'Madalena' (not her real name) is a 17-year-old student who had been attending high school in Central Java since 1994. The unrest in Java following the fall of President Suharto in May 1998 forced her back to East Timor, where she resumed her studies at a secondary

school in Dili. She has never been politically active, and no one in her family had experienced problems or conflict with the authorities. Until, that is, a Portuguese delegation of election observers arrived in East Timor in July 1999 and asked to rent the family's house in Dili. "It was decided," she explains, "that my family would move into the smaller house on the same property and that the Portuguese delegation would live in our house. As soon as people heard about this, we started having trouble".

Madalena reports that shortly afterwards she remembers the family was visited by the chief of a local militia who was dressed in, "a uniform with no badges on it and carrying a stick". This man demanded that they not let the house to the Portuguese. "He said that when the Portuguese left there would be no one to protect us and that something terrible would happen to the family. He did not specify what that would be." According to Madalena, other members of this same uniformed group, carrying swords, came to the house in the following days and threatened anyone in the household, "even the servants and the driver". On one occasion Madalena recalls that, "they threatened to cut off my father's head". Her parents, however, ignored the threats and the Portuguese delegation moved in.

> *"The day after the Portuguese moved in, heavy rocks were thrown onto the roof of our house. This continued for three days. Our neighbours saw that it was the same people who had visited us who were throwing rocks at the house. My neighbours took it in turns to watch the house and the stoning finished. But the men kept coming to the house and threatening that once the Portuguese left they would 'do something to us all'."*

On 4 September, the day when the result of the independence ballot was declared, the Portuguese officials persuaded the family, for their own safety, to go with them to the Portuguese delegation headquarters. Travelling in separate cars in a convoy under police protection, the group made their way through the streets of Dili. "When I looked out of the window," says Madalena, "all I could see was empty streets."

As the convoy approached the Portuguese offices, the police formed a barrier in the road so that the convoy could drive into the compound unobstructed. Madalena could see members of the militia lined up on the road outside the Portuguese compound.

> *"They were Aitarak militia. They were wearing long false black hair, black Aitarak T-shirts and holding 'traditional' weapons[1]. The police did not force them to leave, they just stood in front of them. All was going smoothly until one of the militias suddenly started shooting..."*

At this point the occupants of the cars leapt out and ran inside the compound. Madalena and her family ran upstairs and lay down on the floor while, outside, the shooting continued.

Shortly afterwards, according to Madalena, a police officer came into the compound and asked a Portuguese official for the key to a car parked at the front gate. Then the police officer went outside, returning shortly after with the luggage out of the boot. Moments later

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[1] An assortment of weapons typically including home-made guns, machetes, swords and spears.

however, Madalena saw a member of the militia driving the car away: "I can only assume that the police officer gave the militia the key."

After a telephone call between the Portuguese staff and UNAMET, the group made their way - again by convoy, with Madalena and her family huddled in the back of a truck - to the UNAMET school compound. There were police outside but, as Madalena notes, "even once we were in there we were afraid because we could still hear the shooting going on." Inside were other East Timorese, mostly women and children, who had sought shelter there.

The family stayed at the school compound for one night before moving to a private house which was almost next door to the main UNAMET compound. Here they remained for the next three days, until, on the third day, a man in civilian clothes with, as Madalena puts it, "lots of power" came to the house and demanded to be let in. This man turned off the electricity in the house and "was saying very terrible and insulting things". He ordered the civilians to leave immediately and soldiers came streaming into the house. Madalena remembers:

> *"The women and the children in the house were crying... I ran out the back door with my mother, aunt and cousin. We ran into the UNAMET compound... We thought that the others in the house were all following, but they did not come. We became very scared and my mother went to (a UNAMET official) begging him to go to the house to get the others. My mother was afraid that they had already been killed. He went... and brought the rest of the people from the house".*

The next day the family found that the Portuguese officials had arranged for them to be included in the UNAMET list of evacuees for that day. They were put in the back of an open truck and driven to the airport.

> *"We were very frightened because we did not know if the military would keep to their agreement not to kill us....The TNI (Indonesian National Army) were all around us on the truck. We were told to lie down in the bottom of the truck... On the way to the airport, the (TNI) officer shouted out to some militia, 'Look at the dogs and monkeys we have here'."*

On the road to the airport, the convoy approached a bend where the headquarters of the *Aitarak* militia stood. Here, Madalena says:

> *"The truck slowed right down as we went round the bend. The abusive TNI officer addressed my father: 'You only make us busy. We should cut off all of your heads like this one.' My father does not understand Javanese dialect but I did because I had been studying in Java, so I sat up and looked through the slats of the truck. I saw the most terrible thing that will stay in my memory forever. I saw a man being executed. He was a Timorese man.... His back was facing me and I could see that his hands were tied. He was naked and being pulled backwards by a piece of wire towards a flagpole. When he arrived at the flagpole, I saw his head being cut off with*

a machete or a sword. I saw his head fall off onto the ground. I could not see the person who cut off his head because my vision was obstructed by one of the TNI's legs in the truck. It was outside the front of the Aitarak militia headquarters. I saw the machete and then I saw the man's head fall off. I did not see any other adults. I only saw children with the Indonesian flag tied onto their heads. When I saw this I screamed to my mother, 'Mummy! Mummy! They cut off his head!' The military in the truck did not react in any way."

The family reached Australia later that day. At the time of her interview with Amnesty International, Madalena reported medical problems, including weight loss and sleeplessness, which she attributes to witnessing the execution. "At the moment I am OK, but I don't know for sure how I feel. I feel very fragile with trauma. I have very strong memories of seeing the man killed. When I am talking about it, then I recall it very clearly" When asked about her plans, she replies that she does not think about the future.

A 26-year-old woman's story

"My family was fearful that there would be a lot of violence when the result of the ballot was announced. I was sent off to the Cannossian Sisters' residence early in the morning, at about 6 am... From the beginning the militias were out and making their presence felt around the Cannossian residence. They were shooting in the air to scare the youths out of the residence. TNI (Indonesian National Army) and Brimob (Mobile Police Brigade) were there as well and they were shooting in the air, too. They were shooting from the morning to the night.

"A militia member finally broke into the residence on 7 September 1999. The Sister went out and saw that the militia member was right at the door and she tried to negotiate with him. He told everyone that we had to go the police compound or else we would die. We did not want to go there. We were afraid we would be killed. The police who were there with guns appeared to be supporting the militias. We were told that from the police compound we would be taken to Atambua and Kupang [in West Timor]. The Sister refused to agree to us going to the police compound. After some negotiations, she announced that we were going to the UNAMET compound instead... Then we walked to the UNAMET compound on foot. We had to leave everything behind. We were not attacked along the way. We were silent, scared and kept our heads down. We went to the school compound which is next door and connected to the UNAMET compound by a small doorway.

"On the afternoon of 10 September 1999, the militias attacked the school compound. I saw them coming in on two motorcycles, with three people on each one. When they first arrived there seemed to be a mock struggle with the army. Then they yelled 'Attack, Attack!' The TNI soldiers outside did nothing. They looked the other way. The person on the front of each of the

two motorcycles were TNI uniformed soldiers. On the back each had two Aitarak members wearing the Aitarak militia black T-shirts. They came in with swords which they were swinging at people, but they did not hit anyone...

"The people inside the compound were panicking and some were so scared that they jumped over the fence which had barbed wire on top. Some parents were so terrified for the safety of their children that they just hurled their babies and young children over the fence. Many of them were cut on the wire or hurt when they fell on the other side. I could see that the army were playing a very direct role in this attack. They were shooting in the air trying to frighten and panic the people and looting all our possessions."

"I feel like a hunted animal" a student leader's story

Samuel Marcal was a university student in Kupang, West Timor, studying theology and philosophy. He was also involved in the East Timorese student movement and in his interview with Amnesty International recalled how the threats against students in West Timor had mounted steadily from January 1999.

In June 1999 as he left his student dormitory, Samuel was accosted by two people whom he believed to be *Kopassus* (Special Forces Command) officers:

"One of them... showed me a list of people he was looking for. There were around 200 names on the list... Pointing to my name he said, 'Do you know this man?' I tried to mask my shock and pull myself together. I said, 'I am from Flores but I know who you mean. He was here but now he is back in Dili.' I left quickly and my heart was pumping at my lucky escape."

From 1 August, when the university holiday began, many students from West Timor and some from other parts of Indonesia returned to East Timor to register for the vote and to inform other people about their right to vote. Samuel Marcal arrived in East Timor on 22 August. That evening there was a meeting in Dili to assign tasks among the students who had volunteered to help in the voter information campaign. As the meeting was underway, a shot was fired through the window from a home-made gun: the bullet narrowly missed Samuel Marcal's head but smashed his glasses before embedding itself in a wall. The assailant fled in the darkness.

A few days later Samuel went back to Kupang. He returned to East Timor on 27 August, travelling, for his safety, with a delegation of foreigners who had come to observe the ballot. Samuel Marcal takes up the story:

"That night, four of the foreigners insisted that I sleep in the same place as them at a house in Kampung Alor. About 15 minutes after we arrived, militias surrounded the house. They threatened to burn the house down if they did not open the door. They yelled, 'Push the Timorese kid out or we'll

burn the house down!' The delegation rang the Indonesian police and UNAMET. Eventually they both came. Next day we moved to a different house ..."

After voting, Samuel Marcal went to Ermera, still in the company of some foreign observers. On the way they saw Indonesian police and soldiers shooting at people and burning houses. "They were using automatic weapons and were hitting lots of people who I saw falling to the ground. Over 10 people were shot. UNAMET arrived at the scene too. The delegates were demanding to know why the soldiers were shooting. The soldiers responded that they were doing this because the people did not want to go and vote."

In September, knowing that he was unsafe in East Timor, Samuel Marcal travelled to Bali and then Kupang before eventually arriving in Darwin, Australia. Speaking of his experiences, he said:

"I still get nightmares and panic attacks when I see someone wearing a black T-shirt. I still feel frightened and jumpy all the time, especially when I see someone with a gun. I felt like a hunted animal. I have difficulty pushing my mind to remember things and then I remember things I want to forget. I cannot rest. I cannot sleep."

An East Timorese UNAMET employee, Covalima district

"The next day (after the announcement of the ballot result), the whole situation turned sour. By early in the morning, the militias and the army had already set up road blocks to stop any cars or people from coming in or out. Militia were at the check-points too, but it was mainly army that I saw These road blocks meant that many of the local staff who had stayed in their houses were unable to return to the office. They therefore were not evacuated.

"The militia and the army were going crazy, burning everyone's houses. The UNAMET staff decided to evacuate the area. Many of the local staff had not turned up for work and we were worried about them, but the situation was getting worse so the evacuation was to go ahead. Everyone got into the cars to leave the office. About six or seven militia came over to us and said, 'You can't leave because we have a road block set up... If you try to come through, you will be killed. We will not let you go through'.

"The militia went back to the office with UNAMET staff to negotiate the road block. There were police everywhere but they did not do anything except stand by and watch the militia... It took hours to negotiate an arrangement."

Rafael's story

"Rafael" (not his real name) is an 18-year-old student who was attending high school in Dili before the independence ballot. During the period leading up to the ballot, Rafael witnessed a *Brimob* police officer assault a journalist - whom he describes as "Chinese or Japanese" - who had been filming another *Brimob* police officer allegedly killing a pro-independence youth. "Suddenly [the] *Brimob* policeman grabbed the journalist from behind, put one hand over his mouth, threw him in the ditch on the side of the road and jumped up and down on his back."

On the night of the 3 September 1999 Rafael and his family heard that the result of the ballot would be announced the next day. Nervous of what might happen, his parents, brothers and sisters went to the UNAMET compound, but since "it was already dark and I did not have time" Rafael went instead to a Church, where a number of other refugees had also gathered. Early the next day Rafael and about 15 young men climbed a nearby hill, where they had a good view of the church and the school and seminary next door.

> *"The Aitarak militias, the army - although dressed in Aitarak uniform, I recognised some of them as BTT (Territorial Battalion) soldiers from my area - and Brimob police in uniform arrived at the church with two big army trucks. They tried to get the refugees out of the church, but the refugees refused. Then they threw a grenade into the Portuguese headquarters (of the election observers delegation), which was further along, to frighten them... I saw that the Brimob police and Aitarak militia had guns and were poking the refugees with them to force them onto the truck. People were screaming and were very upset They filled up the two trucks with people and took them in the direction of Comoro... The same thing happened at the seminary and school. Two trucks came. The Brimob and Aitarak and BTT pretending to be Aitarak, attacked the compound, forced people out at gun point and then loaded them into trucks. The priests, seminarians and the choir boys were all treated the same way. Those who refused to move were kicked and beaten."*

At this point, Rafael and his group came under fire: "Two bullets hit the earth very close, just in front of where I was lying. The bullets came from the direction of the Portuguese compound." The youths fled, pursued for a short while by "about 15 soldiers", according to Rafael. Eluding them, Rafael continued on his way.

One day while he was in the Dili area (Rafael cannot remember the exact date), hiding among some coffee trees with a group of refugees, Rafael says he witnessed the killing of a woman by Indonesian soldiers. He saw two cars arriving filled with what he believes were *Kopassus* (Special Forces Command) troops. "There must have been others as well because I looked out from the coffee trees and I could see many red berets," he says.

> *"The moment they saw the Kopassus the refugees panicked and started running. The Kopassus troops ran into the trees, fanned out and then started shooting at us. I was running away when I saw an older woman hit by a bullet in her head. She was standing next to her husband who cannot walk and was in a wheel chair. She was looking after him as she always did. When the bullet hit her she fell and her head fell directly into her husband's*

lap. It was very sad and he was so shocked. She died instantly. She was the mother of five. She was known as Lita and her husband was known as Tilo. They originally lived in Bemori but had fled to Dare when the situation became too bad. There was another elderly lady who was so shocked by the shooting that she fell onto a rock and suffered a head wound. I do not know if any others were injured."

After the shooting incident, Rafael sought refuge in the UNAMET compound in Dili, crawling in through a hole in the wire of the UNAMET fence. There he was reunited with his family. They spent a further three days inside the compound before being evacuated to Australia. His memory of the trip to the airport was of "sitting in an army truck with TNI [Indonesian National Army] soldiers all around us. There was a little boy crying and crying."

Of his future plans, he commented:

"I arrived in Australia on Wednesday 15 September 1999. In the future I want to continue my studies. I do not care where, but I want to study. If given a free choice, I would probably want to study in Australia - because many of the schools and the university in Dili have been destroyed - but then I would like to return to East Timor and live in freedom. I am not sure if there is any hope for the future, but I feel that if I could study, I might begin to feel that the future exists."

Three-year-old Vincente - what future?

Three-year-old 'Vincente' (not his real name) is having to cope with the abduction of his mother.

He is now ill with a respiratory problem, and his father explains how the traumatic events in their lives have affected him. "My son has been very sad since the disappearance of his mother in March [1999]. He still does not understand where she has gone and he clings to me all the time because he is afraid I will disappear too. I want to look after him very well. The priests have been helping me a lot."

Vincente's parents were both independence supporters. His mother was reportedly abducted by *Aitarak* militia members in March. She had left her home in Dili to visit relatives when, according to an eye-witness, a member of the *Aitarak* militia took her away. Her husband speculated that his wife may have been arrested for political reasons or simply because she was a woman. He said that she had been detained in police custody for a week in November 1998. He himself had also been briefly detained after the Santa Cruz cemetery massacre in Dili in November 1991.

After the East Timorese people voted for independence on 30 August 1999, violence engulfed East Timor. Vincente's father told how he witnessed *Besi Merah Putih* militia and *Aitarak* militia, recognizable by their articles of clothing, shooting indiscriminately and burning houses. He also explained how he had seen a member of the *Aitarak* militia hack a

youth in the leg with a knife, cut his throat and then cut his body into pieces and throw them into a burning house. Eventually UNAMET personnel took Vincente and his father to the UNAMET compound. They eventually escaped to safety. They fear that Vincente's mother is dead.

"I was constantly on the move and in hiding" an East Timorese student leader in Jakarta

'Antonio' (not his real name), now 26 years old, comes from a family who was involved with *Falintil* (pro-independence armed opposition group). His father had been detained and tortured and, as a teenager, he was part of a network providing food, medicines, information and support to *Falintil*. In 1992 he left East Timor to study in Jakarta and a few years later became involved in the clandestine student movement. This operated publicly as a support centre for East Timorese students. It also secretly campaigned to reveal the truth of what was happening in East Timor and supported students who were in danger because of their real or suspected support for independence.

Antonio explains how threats against East Timorese students increased throughout Indonesia as the vote on East Timor's future drew near.

> *"Between 17 and 23 August 1999 the severed heads of chickens were left hanging outside the door of the East Timorese students' dormitory in Yogjakarta (in Java). The message attached was, 'This will happen to you if you do not vote for autonomy'... Threats against East Timorese people were occurring across other islands too. In Central Java, Kodim (District Military Command) soldiers threatened that East Timorese people would lose their jobs unless they voted for autonomy. East Timorese militias would follow up with further threats that their throats would be cut if they voted for independence."*

After the result of the Popular Consultation was announced the threats increased and some students were attacked. Antonio recalled that in Yogjakarta, on 5 September,

> *"...two trucks containing unemployed youths, some militias and some soldiers dressed in plain clothes (recognized by the students as being from the area) came to the dormitory where East Timorese students were staying. I do not know if they were carrying weapons. They threatened, "You have to leave here. This building belongs to the Indonesian government. You now have independence. You have until 12 pm to leave. If you are still here when we return, we will cut your throats."*

The students went to the Catholic University for protection, but they noticed militias lurking nearby and about 200 students moved on from the university to the Catholic Church.

Antonio said that as early as July 1999 he had been told that his name was on a list of East Timorese people who were being sought by *Kopassus* (Special Forces Command). He moved house most nights in order to avoid danger. Although he did not want to leave, he

said that foreign embassy personnel who were helping to protect him urged him to go to Australia. In Australia he tries to keep in touch with people in Indonesia. He said:

> *"There are East Timorese in hiding all over Indonesia. I received a call from 40 people in hiding in the religious community in Kupang. They are running out of food and are desperate to escape..... There are people hiding in Maumere, Flores. I have heard that they are safe in an immediate sense but they cannot remain in these conditions for long. The militias will find them and force them to move on. They will try to kill them when they move."*

Immanuel's story

'Immanuel' (not his real name) is a 23-year-old from Ainaro district who had been studying English at Dili University until 1997, when he moved to Jakarta, trying unsuccessfully to seek asylum from a foreign embassy in the city. He returned to East Timor in January 1999, just as the militias were becoming especially active in Ainaro district. According to Immanuel, the militias were going from house to house threatening the residents and demanding that they help with the pro-integration campaign: "Many people joined because they were afraid. Many times the people were forced to attend public meetings to talk about integration," recalls Immanuel. Then the militias began to target supporters of independence, calling at their homes and asking for people by name. "If they found the person they were looking for, they would beat them repeatedly with a gun or sticks." In one such incident, the militias reportedly shot and killed two youths from Manutasi during a pro-independence rally.

In February 1999 Immanuel's brother was seized by the militia from in front of the family house in the village of Cassa, Ainaro district. His brother told Immanuel later that he had been taken to the *Koramil* (sub-district military command) and handed over to *Kopassus* (Special Forces Command). There he was allegedly kicked and beaten with fists and rifle-butts. "They held him for a week at *Koramil*," says Immanuel. "Every day they beat him, until one of his teeth fell out. He was held in a room on his own. They wanted him to confess to assisting *Falintil*. When he refused to confess they would beat him more." During this period his family were repeatedly harassed, at home and in the marketplace. "They threatened to kill everyone in the family," says Immanuel.

In July 1999 Immanuel was employed as a translator for UNAMET. In this position he was able to confirm that in Dare, Dili district, "right up until the vote, the militias were threatening and harassing people". On occasion he was present when a UNAMET officer took reports of harassment to the police:

> *"...but the police - the Kontingen Lorosae[2] and Brimob police - would say 'No problem. This is not a problem'. UNAMET received many complaints from the people of Dare and Ainaro about BTT Battalion 141: they*

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[2] This was the special police contingent sent to East Timor to oversee the Popular Consultation

continually supported the militias by giving them money, guns and transport."

On the day of the vote, Immanuel was in the polling station in Dare when one of the militia leaders came in to vote and then remained in an attempt to intimidate other voters:

"After he voted he left the room and he complained to UNAMET that the local staff were pro- independence. He called other militia leaders and told them to walk in circles around the polling booth. He went along the queue of people telling them that they had to vote for autonomy. There were many Brimob police present. When I saw (him) disturbing people in the queue, I reported this to the District Electoral Officer, who called Brimob and the MLO (UNAMET Military Liaison Officer) to remove him from the queue... The Brimob warned him but did nothing to remove him. He stayed there for hours..."

According to Immanuel, at one point the militia leader approached a local UNAMET officer and threatened that he would "have to meet with him later".

Immanuel was at the UNAMET office as the result was announced. Almost immediately after he saw people fleeing the market area nearby:

"An older man came past the office and I asked him what was going on. He told me that the militias were gathering at the Kodim [district military command] *office and were being supplied with guns, grenades and traditional weapons. He told me that they had orders to burn every pro-independence house."*

A UNAMET officer called the *Brimob* police to ask for protection for the UNAMET office, but according to Immanuel, the police commander refused to send police reinforcements to the office and said that the UNAMET staff would have to come to the police station for protection. "All of us and the local staff were moved to the police station at Ainaro in a convoy."

Later that night members of the militia group *Mahidi* ("Live Or Die for Integration with Indonesia") arrived by car outside the police station.

"One of the militia members got out of the car and stood on the car brandishing a gun and threatening people outside the police station. He was pointing the gun at the local UNAMET staff yelling: 'You are the ones who supported the independence people'. There were around 100 police around the police station. They were standing in a circle around the UNAMET staff. None of the police approached the man with the gun and tried to disarm him."

According to Immanuel a UN Civpol (civilian police) officer approached the police commander demanding to know why the police were not intervening. "The commander told the Civpol that it was a free street for everyone, including the militias."

The next afternoon all the UNAMET staff were evacuated to Dili by helicopter. Immanuel stayed in the UNAMET compound in Dili for the next six days.

> *"I could see from the compound that many houses were on fire. I could hear shooting all night. Many refugees were staying close to the compound -- they were being shot at by the militias and so they ran into the compound. I heard the UNAMET staff asking them who had been attacking them. They said that they had been shot at not just by the militias but also by the TNI [Indonesian National Army]."*

Immanuel was evacuated to Darwin on 10 September. He has heard that his family's house in his home village has been burned down and the whereabouts of his mother and father, four sisters and three brothers, are unknown. He believes that some family members fled to the mountains, while others may have been forced into West Timor.

"As we were running we were shot at" a family escapes to the UNAMET compound

'Carlos' (not his real name), a businessman, was afraid that after the result of the Popular Consultation was announced the violence in Dili would escalate. He decided to move, with his wife and five children, to a house where some foreigners were staying.

On 4 September the result was announced - an overwhelming vote for independence. Carlos continues his story: "The next morning at around 9 am we were heading to the UNAMET compound on foot... and I could hear the shooting starting. There were lots of people screaming and I feared the worst, that we had been caught out. I know that the militias and the army like to kill boys and men especially so I tied my two sons to my body, my wife brought the other children with her. We took the back routes hoping that we would not be obstructed."

> *"At 1pm we decided to take the final leg of the trip. As we were running, we were shot at. There were Aitarak militias and army and Kopassus all mixed up together. My eight-year-old daughter was almost killed when a bullet whisked over her head. It was a terrible experience, myself and my wife trying to keep all the children with us who could not run very fast, with bullets flying around.*
>
> *"We made it inside the school compound (next door to the UNAMET headquarters), safe but terrified. We were in the school compound for two days and then on 6 or 7 September, the militias and the army came into the compound and started shooting. I did not see exactly who was doing the shooting. They all seemed to have guns. The attack caused great panic in the compound. There is a small gate connecting the school compound with the UNAMET compound but it was not big enough for everyone to get through quickly. To speed up the path to safety, people started climbing the fence and throwing their children over the other side. Only two of my children were with me. I was separated from my wife in the panic and the*

push to get out. I passed the two children I had to a man who sat up on the fence to protect the children from the wire and then threw as many of them over to the other side as possible. I was very upset when I found out that my son had been badly injured when he was thrown straight onto the fence. He had a deep cut just above his right eye and quite serious gouges all over his body. They are only just starting to heal up now.

"One of my relatives returned to my house on 5 September to collect food. By 6 September, the house had been razed to the ground. All the houses had been destroyed in our area."

In mid-September the family was evacuated to Australia.

GLOSSARY

Military and Police
Brimob: Mobile Police Brigade
BTT: [military] Territorial Battalion
Kodim: District Military Command
Kopassus: Special Forces Command
Koramil: Sub-district Military Command
Polda: Regional Police Command
TNI: Indonesian National Army

Militia groups
Aitarak (Thorn)
Besi Merah Putih (BMP, Iron Red and White)

Other
Falintil: East Timorese National Liberation Army
UNAMET: UN Assistance Mission to East Timor

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